Making History: Alberta's Public Service

1995 ★ 2004

10th

Premier's ★ Award
of Excellence

10 Years of Innovation & Achievement

Making History: Alberta's Public Service 1995 – 2004

ALBERTA'S PUBLIC SERVICE— MODERN DAY PIONEERS

Albertans have always been pioneers. From the province's first days, they have held dear the values of independence, honesty, hard work, and resilience in the face of obstacles. They have demonstrated their concern for family and community, and their willingness to make sacrifices and care for others. Above all, they have always been eager to explore new ideas and blaze new paths.

These values helped build a strong province that is the envy of the rest of Canada – and the world. They determine how Albertans live their lives. They also shape the expectations Albertans have for their government.

Alberta's public service has changed with the times since it was first created in 1905 when Alberta became a province. But its values have remained the same, even as the obstacles have changed.

"The teams who receive the Premier's Award of Excellence demonstrate a dedication to excellence and a strong drive to innovate and redefine standards for success. Perhaps more than anything else, they demonstrate a commitment to making Alberta the best possible place to be."

PREMIER RALPH KLEIN

In 1992, the province faced a legacy of annual deficits and a mounting debt. Albertans wanted changes – and under the leadership of Ralph Klein, the government delivered. The public service was called on to find ways to deliver services more efficiently, to build a new fiscal framework, and to become more accountable to Albertans.

This is the story of how Alberta's public service met this challenge. It's the story of how the province's public servants reflect Albertans' values and demonstrate them in action every day. It's the story of how Alberta's public service made history, and continues to do so.

BEGINNING A NEW ERA OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Budget '94 laid out a plan of action to respond to Albertans' concerns about deficits and the debt. The plan called on the public service to:

- *help government eliminate annual budget deficits and start eliminating the province's overall debt, which had grown to over $20 billion;*
- *adopt the practices of successful businesses, like planning and performance measures;*
- *ensure openness and accountability through regular reporting;*
- *reduce the size of government by eliminating waste and duplication;*
- *create cost-effective programs targeted to Albertans' priorities, involving the private sector where possible and maximizing available technology;*
- *find innovative and creative solutions to transform government from within the public service, and reward this creativity and innovation;*
- *establish new partnerships with the federal government, other provinces and local governments to eliminate duplication and overlap; and*
- *empower local decision makers to have greater control of their future.*

The government was determined to accomplish these goals without implementing a tax increase, new taxes, or a sales tax. To do this, it enlisted the feedback and participation of Albertans across the province. As Premier Klein said, "The strength of Alberta lies in our ability to face problems head on, to build on the wisdom and energy of Albertans to find new solutions."

Albertans were eager to contribute their ideas. Over the course of 18 months, they shared their thoughts with public service employees through more than 650,000 phone calls to toll-free numbers. Nearly 124,000 people attended 4,700 public meetings, roundtables, and information sessions.

Albertans from all walks of life had the opportunity to participate in everything from discussion groups on health and education, to budget roundtables and economic development planning sessions. They expressed their views on ways to reduce government spending without sacrificing priority programs or quality of services. They sat down with Premier Klein at forums to share their concerns and offer ideas on change. In the end, a new direction for government was set, guided by those impacted most—the people of Alberta.

"Under Premier Klein's leadership, Alberta took a pioneering approach to fiscal responsibility."

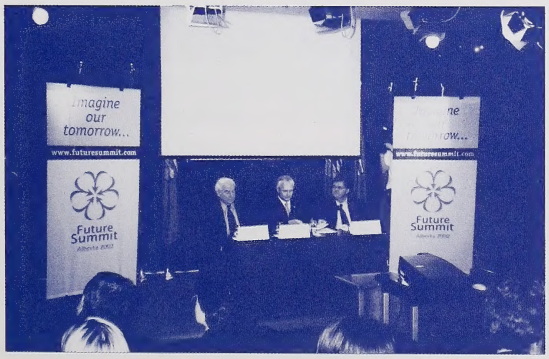
JULIAN NOWICKI
DEPUTY MINISTER OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Consultation with the people of Alberta on their needs, priorities, and the future of the province became a way of doing business that continues today.

A spirit of continuous improvement fueled organizers of the 1999 Minister's Forum on Learning. This two-day conference featured internationally recognized keynote speakers, small group sessions, computer comment stations, and a showcase displaying department initiatives that complemented the forum's theme, Learning for Life. The purpose of the forum was to maintain two-way communication between Alberta Learning and the people it serves. Using creativity, innovation, and teamwork, organizers planned and completed the entire event in less than three months, receiving a Premier's Award of Excellence in 2001.

During this extensive public consultation process, more than 2,300 Albertans completed the summit workbook, 1,000 people participated in MLA-hosted meetings, and over 800 people attended 11 regional forums. As a result of the summit, delegates developed strategies and ideas for action in seven priority areas: the economy, learning, fiscal responsibility, communities, health and wellness, the environment, and governance. The Alberta Future Summit 2002 received a Premier's Award of Excellence in 2003.

Nearly a decade after the Klein government set off on a new direction of fiscal responsibility, the province's deficit was eliminated, and the debt was nearly paid off. The input from Albertans across the province had helped to achieve this significant outcome, and the Alberta government was eager to explore Albertans' vision for the future. To do so, the government established the Alberta Future Summit 2002.



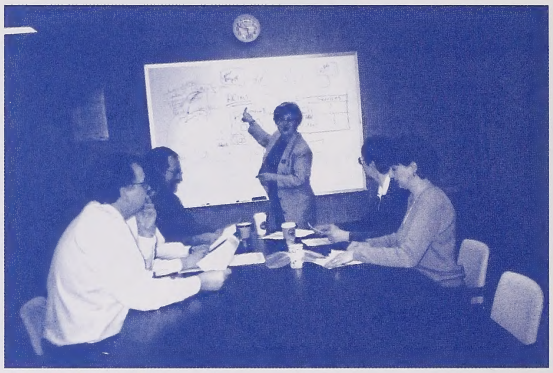
"Alberta's future isn't going to be a replica of the past. It's going to be better."

BUDGET '94 SPEECH

Before things could become better, Alberta's public service had to work through a period of restructuring and reorganizing.

First was a review of core businesses to ensure that programs and services were in alignment with the new direction. As a result of changes implemented, there was a reduction in the number of people employed by the Alberta government.

The first public service back in 1905 had a total of 60 employees. In comparison, 1993's government employed over 30,000 people, a number that was reduced by 9,000 employees, almost 30 percent. Permanent employees whose positions had been eliminated were reassigned to priority programs, offered severance packages, outplacement support, or retraining. Staff in ongoing positions that were interested in early retirement or pursuing other opportunities also had the option of taking voluntary severance.



The government also eliminated, merged, or privatized 37 agencies, boards, and commissions, and services such as liquor distribution and registries were moved to the private sector. Government reduced the number of school boards in Alberta from 181 to 63, and the number of hospital boards and administrations dropped from over 200 to 17 Regional Health Authorities. Today there are 9 Regional Health Authorities.

Part of the government's restructuring process included putting responsibility for certain programs and services into the hands of those people who were on the front lines or who were directly impacted by the outcomes of such programs and services.

In the 1993 Budget speech, the Provincial Treasurer said government was "getting out of the way of business so they can get on with the job". In a number of cases, private sector agencies partnered with the government to deliver services to Albertans in their own communities. Government became more of an "enabler" and less of a "doer," thus ensuring accountability and timely and accessible services.

The Claresholm District Office for Alberta Family & Social Services, within the scope of the department's new mission statement, set out in 1993 to revise its customer focus and to rethink the services it provided and the methods used to deliver those services. They involved their clients in planning and needs identification and reduced red tape so that clients were able to access services more quickly. As a result, the office was able to drastically reduce the social allowance caseload. Three years later, 86 percent of the participants in employment initiatives had remained off welfare roles. High levels of staff commitment enabled employees to deliver services with excellence to the rural communities they served. In 1996, the Claresholm District Office was recognized with a Premier's Award of Excellence.

DOING BUSINESS DIFFERENTLY

With a leaner government in place, all eyes turned towards the future and the inevitable next question: how would the Alberta public service deliver better services to Albertans with 30 percent less staff?

The answer was by doing business differently. Employees were given clearly defined priorities and old rules and regulations were stripped away to create an environment of creativity and innovation where hard work and success were rewarded.

Accountability became a priority for Alberta's public service. The government developed a business plan that included goals, strategies and performance measures. In addition, each ministry established its own business plan outlining its accountability for results.

The Alberta government was the first in Canada to adopt the practice of business planning and Alberta has become a recognized leader in this area.

In the Budget '94 speech, the Provincial Treasurer had this to say about the business plans: "Albertans expect that government resources will be directed to programs that work, that achieve the results we set out to achieve. They deserve to know how we measure the performance of government programs and the progress we are making. And they deserve to have information so they can judge our actions and hold us accountable for results."

Provincial Archives of Alberta, RS447/14

In 1994, Alberta Treasury established the Performance Measurement Group to help Albertans assess the government's social and economic performance. To do so, the group developed and implemented an outcome-based framework to measure government performance and enhance government's accountability to Albertans—a framework that was the first of its kind in the country. In 1995, the first annual "Measuring Up" was published, reporting on both measures and results to Albertans. In 1999, Alberta received an Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) award for Innovative Management for the implementation of its accountability framework. And in 2000, the Performance Measurement Group received a Premier's Award of Excellence.

Through business planning, public service employees searched for ways to streamline programs, improve productivity, and increase opportunities for private sector delivery and partnerships. Government was moving from a regulatory and direct service role to one with a greater focus on policy development and facilitation. Ministry business plans would ensure government resources were spent on priority areas identified by Albertans. As stated in the Alberta government's first business plan for 1994 – 1997: "Albertans say get the province's financial house in order, but don't compromise the quality of essential programs." This was a tall order.

The Dairy Industry Governance Team, a recipient of the Premier's Award of Excellence in 2003, led a major outsourcing initiative. The project team developed the legislative and regulatory framework to shift control of the dairy industry away from government and into the hands of the dairy industry. This client-led project involved the departments of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and Justice and Attorney General. The processes involved in this initiative serve as a project management example for all government departments.

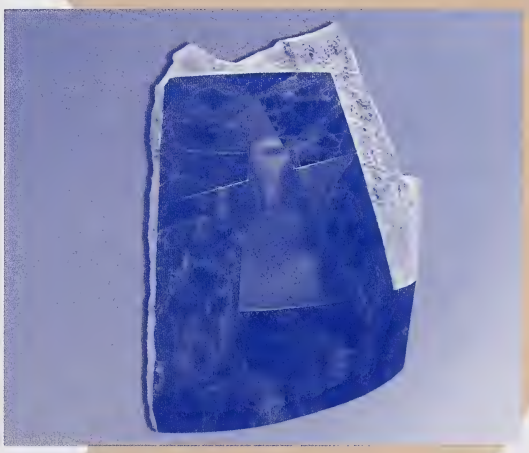
As they developed programs and services to better and more cost-effectively serve Albertans, Alberta public service employees were *indeed* doing more with less. The growing number of innovative programs and ideas emerging from departments across government was proof that employees were not just dealing with change but capitalizing on it.

"As Alberta moved toward a smaller, more efficient and results-oriented government, the public service was challenged as never before to develop new and better ways of ensuring efficiency, accountability, and measuring performance."

JULIAN NOWICKI
DEPUTY MINISTER OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Maximizing the efficient use of existing government space was the challenge confronting the Edmonton Plan—Head Office Accommodation Plan project team, a team that received a Premier's Award of Excellence Award in 2002. The reorganization project was one of the most complex accommodation projects undertaken by the Property Development Branch of Alberta Infrastructure. Its task was to consolidate ten departments, while keeping within certain timing, budgetary, and space utilization parameters. Complete it they did, and in the process the people involved in the project learned important lessons that continue to improve the branch's existing planning and project management processes.

In 1995, Premier Klein established the Premier's Award of Excellence to acknowledge and reward these innovative teams of employees who exemplified superior customer service, employed excellent business practices, and created positive and more productive work environments.



The Alberta public service was successful in meeting the diverse needs of Albertans while living within the province's means. With goals and performance measures firmly in place in department business plans, and with recognition programs such as the Premier's Award of Excellence encouraging employees to strive even higher, Alberta's public service employees were setting new standards of excellence.

Deputy Ministers' Committee

Collaboration and teamwork became the focus of government, and ministries were encouraged and expected to "get out of their silos." This new way of working was driven in part by the establishment of the Deputy Ministers' Committee and Cross-Ministry Initiatives. The formal establishment of this committee helped to ensure continuous communication, coordination, and cooperation across ministries.

One role of the Deputy Ministers' Committee is to manage cross-ministry initiatives. These initiatives are established by Cabinet on an annual basis and include initiatives that stand to benefit most from a strategic interdepartmental approach to achieve results.

10th

Cross-ministry initiatives were established in a number of areas focused on priority policy areas, administrative initiatives, and other strategic priorities. The 2004-05 priority policy initiatives are: Economic Development Strategy, Aboriginal Policy Initiative, Health Sustainability Initiative, and Alberta Children and Youth Initiative. The key administrative initiatives are: Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy, Shared Services Delivery Improvement Strategy, Service Alberta, and Information and Communication Technology Initiative.

When the government identified the need to change the way managers were rewarded, the Personnel Administration Office led an interdepartmental team in designing a new performance pay approach. Designed in 1997 and implemented in 1998, the Management Rewards Strategy recognizes managers in accordance with their achievements. The strategy has become a showcase of innovative compensation for public sector managers, and jurisdictions across Canada have shown interest in the innovations accomplished by the Management Rewards Strategy design team. In 1999, the Management Rewards Strategy received a Premier's Award of Excellence.

Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy

Moving ahead, the restructured public service was stronger than ever. The focus now turned to sustaining this strength and positioning the public service for the future. This was the goal of one of the first cross-ministry initiatives, the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy. Today, the strategy includes a wide range of initiatives including leadership development, attracting and retaining talent, workplace health, and ensuring that the management of human resources continues to be aligned with government goals and priorities. Garnering nation-wide attention, the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy received an Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) award for Innovative Management in 2001.

"The Committee is impressed with the progress made and results achieved in developing a skilled, versatile, and responsive public service through the focus of the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy."

EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM FOR DEPUTY MINISTER COMPENSATION
MARCH 14, 2000

"I believe that Alberta government employees are choosing to learn from the past, and are willingly contributing their individual skills and ideas to each task. As a result, you're creating a whole new - and better - way to provide people with government services and programs."

PREMIER RALPH KLEIN

Alberta's public service employees have always kept a keen eye on social, economic, and environmental issues. These are, after all, the areas that impact the people of Alberta most.

In 2000, Alberta Human Resources and Employment received a Premier's Award of Excellence for the Alberta Job Corps - Edmonton project, an initiative that focuses on providing supports for unemployed people by enabling them to earn money as they gain work experience. The first urban initiative of its kind in Canada, Alberta Job Corps hires participants and pays them an hourly wage, shifting the traditional social worker-client relationship to one of employer-employee. Alberta Job Corps creates a triple-win scenario: it meets the work-preparation needs of its clients, provides community partners with trained candidates to fill job vacancies, and reduces the tax burden by helping people achieve and maintain economic independence.

Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Promise

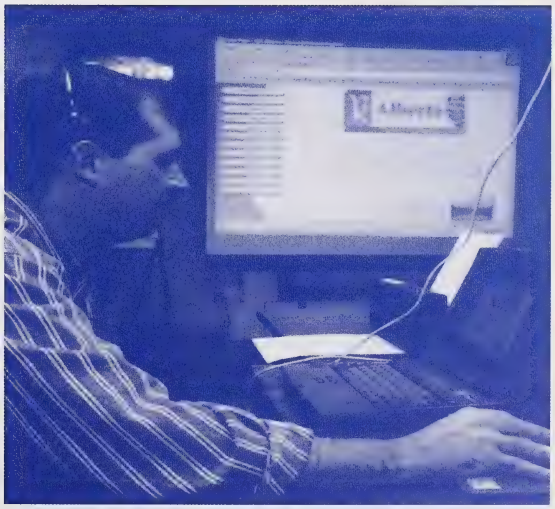
"A vibrant and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children." - Vision from Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Promise - Alberta's Twenty-Year Strategic Plan.

The vision of the Alberta government's new Twenty-Year Strategic Plan is founded upon four key pillars, or opportunities, crucial to the future of the province. The four pillars are: unleashing innovation, leading in learning, competing in a global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. The pillars build on Alberta's strengths, and focus on providing Alberta with new opportunities, not only in traditional areas, but also through increased emphasis on value-added industries such as manufacturing and technology.

Unleashing Innovation

Alberta's public service employees have long embraced innovation. In 1995, Premier Klein said, "Government employees are working hard everyday to improve services and to do better with less in a time of great change. They are trying out new ideas and getting results for the people of Alberta."

The evolution of technology has changed Albertans' lives—both in and outside of the public service. The Government of Alberta launched its website in 1995, linking it to individual ministry websites. Through the use of technology, websites and email, government is more accessible and more accountable than ever to the people of Alberta.



Technology has been an essential tool in enabling Alberta's public service employees to improve services and save the government money at the same time. One example is the Consumer Affairs Tracking System (CATS). When Alberta Municipal Affairs purchased an existing system, the people involved in the project converted it to help the department better manage investigation, complaint tracking, and license approval processes. The revamped system helped Municipal Affairs serve Albertans more efficiently and it saved taxpayers $400,000 dollars. The CATS project received a Premier's Award of Excellence in 1999.

Billed as the greatest "aggie" Internet site in the world, Ropin' the Web enables Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to deliver current department information and services electronically, and connects citizens with government directly and cost-effectively. The site is uniquely user-friendly, and is organized on the basis of content and its associated information. It is kept user-friendly by its "rule of clicks"—users must be able to access information on the fourth click The site's high quality graphics and visual appeal, resulting from strict layout standards adhered to by the Ropin' the Web design team, helped garner a Premier's Award of Excellence in 1997.

Leading in Learning

Today, learning continues to be a high priority for the Alberta government and Alberta's public service employees are leading the way.

In 1997, Alberta Education was recognized with a Premier's Award of Excellence for its success in delivering the Western Canadian Protocol Mathematics Project. The project team designed a common curriculum and supporting mathematics resources for use in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. All six jurisdictions endorsed the common mathematics curriculum framework for kindergarten through Grade 12, as well as the set of resources approved for use in delivering instruction to students. The first of its kind, the project is being used as a model in subsequent Western Canadian Protocol projects.

Quality of education has, of course, a direct relationship with the quality of Alberta's workforce. To guide students in the transition from school to work, the Career and Technology Studies (CTS) program is a career education program developed to help Alberta students make informed career choices and develop skills for employment. The CTS program updated and revised over 200 courses in four subject areas and developed new subject areas to address current learning needs, aligning teaching and learning with emerging trends in technology, the trades, and in the service industry. The CTS program received a Premier's Award of Excellence in 1998.

Competing in a Global Marketplace

Alberta's economy continues to both attract business and maintain export markets across the globe. Alberta's public service continues to help position the province to maximize global opportunities to keep Alberta competitive and maintain its economic advantages.

In 2000, Economic Development brought over $25 million in potential business opportunities to Alberta when it hosted Globe 2000, the world's foremost international trade event on the business of the environment. Globe 2000 provided Alberta's environmental companies with not only an opportunity to showcase their environmental capabilities, but also the chance to compete against 400 other exhibitors for the attention of 10,000 decision makers and potential clients from target markets in Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas. This project was successful thanks to the collaboration of stakeholders from a variety of Alberta government departments, the federal government and Alberta's private sector. It received a Premier's Award of Excellence in 2001.

Making Alberta the Best Place to Live, Work, and Visit

The fourth pillar in Alberta's Twenty-Year Strategic Plan is improving the quality of life for Albertans and keeping social services responsive, modern, and affordable.

Best Place to Live

People are the province's greatest resource and maintaining Albertans' high quality of life is a priority for the public service. There are many examples of how the public service provides the right services at the right time in a fiscally responsible manner.

In 2000, Alberta Community Development received a Premier's Award of Excellence for its work in improving the Edmonton Seniors Service Centre. In 1994, the centre opened to provide front-line services in support of the newly created Alberta Seniors Benefit and Special Needs Assistance for Seniors programs. Services expanded to include community outreach activities and in-home consultations. In 1999, major renovations were made to improve accessibility, privacy, and comfort for all its visitors. The Edmonton Seniors Service Centre provides service to more than 100,000 seniors, caregivers, and families in the Edmonton area.

Provincial Archives of Alberta, PA56114

While Alberta's public service is committed to meeting the needs of seniors, they're also providing quality front-line services to Alberta's youth, including youth in conflict with the law.

Alberta's Youth Justice Committees are comprised of over 1,300 volunteers who work directly with Alberta Solicitor General to meet the unique needs of youth, families, and victims in their respective communities. In 2002, the Youth Justice Committee initiative received an award for innovative management from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC). In 2003, it was recognized with a Premier's Award of Excellence. Among its many innovative methods of serving their clients, a number of Youth Justice Committees play an alternative measures role, an alternative to the formal court process where committee members decide on consequences for young offenders. Some committees also play a sentence advisory role by suggesting sentencing options for judges to consider when sentencing young offenders.

Best Place to Work

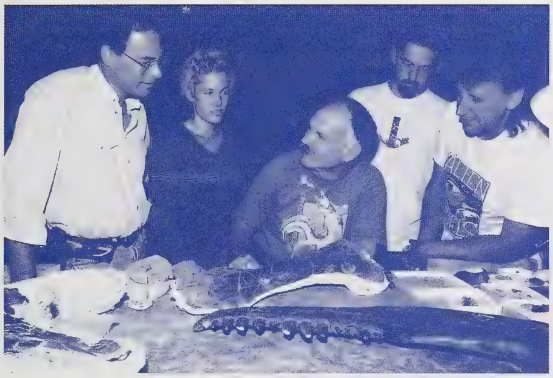
Agriculture, forestry, oil and gas serve as the basis for Alberta's primary industries. Based on these natural resources, Alberta has built an economy capable of constant innovation, creating higher value jobs, goods and services, and sustaining citizens' prosperity and quality of life while maintaining the environment.

Wildland Firefighting Units work to save Alberta's forests. Ground firefighting crews have been an essential component of Alberta's Wildfire Suppression program for years. But in 1995, during one of Alberta's worst forest fire seasons ever, the Forest Protection Group of Alberta Environmental Protection designed and implemented a new training program and created new eight-person Wildland Firefighting Units. The program produced 125 graduates in its first year, and the end result has been better trained firefighters, higher demand for their services from other provinces, and a Premier's Award of Excellence in 1998.

Best Place to Visit

Along with Alberta's natural resources comes the province's natural beauty, a valuable asset in attracting people from all over the world. Jasper and Banff National Parks have brought millions to Alberta to enjoy the magnificence of the Rocky Mountains. Every year, thousands of tourists come to Alberta to enjoy its many lakes, attend world famous festivals and sporting events, and see world-class cultural events and displays.

Alberta's network of heritage attractions is recognized worldwide. Facilities around the province attract 1.5 million visitors annually, generating $60 million provincially. In the early nineties, the Cultural Facilities and Historical Resources Division faced a reduction of up to 50 percent in resources, yet division staff used their ingenuity to turn adversity into advantage. The collaboration of public and private sectors and local communities shapes the entrepreneurial approaches and innovative marketing strategies of the division. Non-traditional services are delivered through hundreds of partnerships, including the completion of an historic hotel at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, self-supporting educational and interpretive programs at the Provincial Museum of Alberta, and maintenance of the provincial names' data base through the Friends of the Geographic Names. In 1995, Alberta Community Development was recognized with a Premier's Award of Excellence.



Alberta Community Development received a 1998 Premier's Award of Excellence for the Royal Tyrrell Museum's Field Experience Program. The program was established to educate the public about the significance and value of Alberta's rich historical resources and to accommodate the emerging desire of the public to work with scientists in their field studies. The program has hosted more than 200 members of the public, media and visiting scientists, and has supported 30 students. It is an excellent example of a project that is acting to preserve, protect and present Alberta's unique natural history in a positive innovative way. The Tyrrell Museum is recognized as a source of unique public science programming, with Field Experience seen as a model for public science participation programs.

CONCLUSION

Over the last ten years, much of the success of the Alberta government in delivering on its core businesses is due to the extraordinary efforts of the people who work in Alberta's public service. With a fundamental commitment to serving Albertans, the public service has demonstrated time and again its ability to rise to challenges, capitalize on change, and make a difference.

Tomorrow there will be new challenges and the public service is ready to find new ways to meet them. Based on Albertans' values and anchored in a common direction, the possibilities are limitless.

Alberta's international offices serve clients in Alberta and abroad. Nearly half a million jobs are linked to the business Alberta does in international markets. To ensure an effective transformation to one cohesive business unit, Economic Development created an international office system characterized by common policies and performance measures; commitment to client service and continuous improvement; and high marks from staff. Through Alberta's international offices' work in international trade and investment, 643 business and investment introductions were made for Alberta companies and their international counterparts in 2000-2001. By 2002-2003, this number increased to 1,122, and 336 of these introductions led to serious business negotiations. The success of the international offices contributes to the growth of Alberta's gross domestic product, leading to new jobs for Albertans and helping to create a vibrant, flexible, globally competitive provincial economy. In 2004, the international offices, as an ongoing work unit, were recognized with a Premier's Award of Excellence.

"It was inspiring to be surrounded by excellence. As a member of the external review team, I was privileged to see the best of the best in the Alberta public service. I wish all Albertans could have this opportunity."

Quote from a member of the 2004 External Review Team for the Premier's Award of Excellence.

"As an external reviewer, I felt most privileged to examine the inside stories, and hard thoughtful work behind some of the most innovative and well-run projects in the province. It gave me a tremendous sense of pride to be an Albertan, and great hope for our future."

Quote from a member of the 2004 External Review Team for the Premier's Award of Excellence.

"In changing the way we do business, Alberta public service employees have gone further and faster than their counterparts in any other jurisdiction that I have ever heard of. They are continuing to set the standard for public service in this country."

PREMIER RALPH KLEIN

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Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

printed in canada

June 2004